

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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WORLD SUNDAY SCHOOL CONVENTION - to be held in Japan

The Executive Committee of the World Council of Christian Education and the World Sunday School Association, meeting at Cleveland Ohio August 1st and 2nd, officially accepted Japan's invitation to have the 14th annual World Convention here in 1958. Although preliminary planning has been going on for some time, this official decision has given the go-ahead signal to the General Planning Committee for the World Convention of the Council of Christian Education and the World Sunday School Association. The General Planning Committee has been set up by the National Christian Council in Japan, and is charged with the selection of a staff, the planning of a program, and the appointing of a fund raising committee. The next meeting of the General Planning Committee will be on September 16th.

LABOR SUNDAY IN JAPAN - second annual observance

The churches in the United Church of Christ (Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan) participated in the second annual observance of Labor Sunday on September 4th. In preparation for this day, the Kyodan Occupational Evangelistic Committee sent out to all Churches a poster announcing the day, a leaflet to be distributed to the members, copies of the translated World Council of Churches statement on "The Christian and His Vocation" and a copy of the special Labor Sunday edition of the "Christian Weekly" (the official Kyodan publication).

The three points of emphasis for this Labor Sunday were:

- 1) To urge the Church members to pray for and evangelize the workers in factories and companies.
- 2) To hold a service of thanksgiving to God for his creative laws by which we are able to manufacture things for man's needs.
- 3) To think together of the real meaning of man's daily work from the point of view of the Christian Faith.

Also, in preparation for this Sunday, a list of 26 books for background reading and reference were suggested. Three of these were: Dr. G. Suehiro's "History of the Labor Union Movement in Japan", Allen Richardson's "Biblical Doctrine of Work" (trans. by Rev. Mishida - "Seisho no Rōdōkan"), and S. Perlman's "Theory of the Labor Movement" (Rōdōundō no Riron).

Some of the international background for this Labor Sunday goes back to 1910 when the A.F. of L. in the USA appealed to the Federal Council of Churches to call a special Labor Sunday. In 1917 the Federal Council of Churches sent out their first annual Labor Sunday Message. About 1920 the "Industrial Christian Fellowship" of the Church of England started a movement toward the observance of an annual Industrial Sunday. In 1949 the NCC of China designated the Sunday preceeding May Day as the time that the Christian Gospel should be clearly related to the laboring man, so that he could observe May Day conscious of his Christian role. Since then the churches of contemporary China have felt a strong bond of fellowship centering about this observance.

Japan, in observing this second annual Labor Sunday, is joining in the growing international Christian tradition.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION WEEK - "Christ Who Unites The World"

September 19th-25th will be National Christian Education Week and is being sponsored by three departments of the NCC. Using the scripture passage Ephesians 4:4-16 as basis, the theme will be "Christ Who Unites the World". This is also the theme of the forthcoming World Sunday School Convention in 1958 to be held in this country. Part of the purpose of Christian Education Week this year is to announce to the nation the important role which the church schools of this country have in the preparation for this conference.

The local church school associations are being urged to stage public rallies, parades, and lectures which will alert the non-Christian community to the great contributions in Christian Education that the churches in Japan are carrying on and ask for understanding and cooperation. Japan is very much aware of the need for international understanding and cooperation and should respond to the idea that in Christ we are all united as brothers. Thus, the theme - "Christ Who Unites the World" is most timely.

LACOUR SPECIAL MISSION - Muto reports

The thirty-two members of the "Centenary Special Mission to Japan" under the direction of Rev. and Mrs. Lacour have completed their two month mission (see JCAN #64, July 1, p 4-5) and returned to the United States. Rev. Tomio Muto, Executive Manager for the Mission, pointed out some of the special merits and defects of this Mission in a special interview with the Japan Christian Activity News. Some of the strengths are:

- 1) Because of the close coordination of the four travelling "evangelistic teams" (which specialized in musical evangelism, movie evangelis, or in preaching evangelism) with the local "centers" (10 in Fukushima Ken, 8 in Osaka-Kobe area, and 4 in Tokyo area) there is both mass appeal and careful, sustained follow up work. This method brings results in large numbers reached, and in the baptism of believers after a period of maturing in the faith.
- 2) Because of the long period of continued cultivation many are brought into the Faith who otherwise would never have been seriously affected. For example, although only about 50 were baptized in the Fukushima area last summer, about 170 were baptized this summer in the same area.
- 3) Because of the cooperation between a) ministers and money from America, b) licensed preachers or seminary students who put their continued effort in here in Japan, and c) nearby ministers of already existing churches who supervise and advise; small groups of believers can grow quickly into established churches with church buildings and active congregations. For example in Fukushima Ken two years ago there was only one Christian where a "center" started. Now there are 24 members, they have decided to purchase land and start to build a church with the money they themselves are raising added to money sent from America. At Tadami, a very remote town, the growing group of believers has already raised over ¥1,000,000 to add to a similar amount sent out from the church of the American pastor who helped start the "center". They will build and start a kindergarten in April and then will be financially independent. Thus, the strategy is to have a coordinated program from the very start through the building up of a self sustaining congregation.
- 4) During the five years of work which is projected, five different American pastors and their congregations back home will become interested in each center and can support it with their prayers and money. This is a great force toward making real the concept of "brotherhood in Christ" in the ecumenical church.

Two of the difficulties of the Special Mission are:

- 1) The language barrier which sometimes limits the effective intercommunication of the pastor and people in the "center". The interpreters are sometimes new to the work and have much to learn. However, Mr. Muto pointed out that the witness of the American ministers through their unselfish and radiant ministry during the hot summer months means more than the words which they preach

